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IN REPLY REFER TO
AGAM-F (M) (1 Feb 68) FOR OT RD-67X148

14 February 1968

SUBJECT: Combat After Action Report - BATTLE OF DOI MA CREEK, 3d Brigade,
9th Infantry Division, Period 9-11 April 1967 (U)

AD 38734
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TO: SEE DISTRIBUTION

1. Forwarded as inclosure is a report, subject as above.
2. Information contained in this report is provided to insure appropriate benefits in the future from Lessons Learned during current operations, and may be adapted for use in developing training material.

BY ORDER OF THE SECRETARY OF THE ARMY:

Kenneth G. Wickham

KENNETH G. WICKHAM
Major General, USA
The Adjutant General

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HEADQUARTERS 3D BRIGADE
9th Infantry Division
APO San Francisco 96370

AVDE-BCO 21 April 1967
SUBJECT: Combat Operations After Action Report (Battle of Doi Ma Creek) (U)

TO Commanding General
9th Infantry Division
ATTN: AVDE-MH
APO San Francisco 96370

1. (U) Date of Operation: 9 - 11 April 1967
2. (U) Location: Rach Kien District, Long An Province
3. (U) Command Headquarters: 3d Brigade, 9th Infantry Division
4. (U) Reporting Officer: Colonel Charles P. Murray, Commanding Officer, 3d Brigade, 9th Infantry Division.
5. (C) Task Organization: Shown below is the task organization during the operation:

2/60 Inf	TF 3/39 Inf	TF 5/60 Inf (M)
Plat C, 15 Engr	3/39 Inf	5/60 Inf (M) (-)
1/4/50 (ARVN)	2/10 Cav (ARVN)	6 3/60 Inf
	Co 1/46 Inf (ARVN)	Plat C 15 Engr
3/60 Inf	Bde Control	
3/60 Inf (-)	2/4 Arty	
	C 15 Engr (-)	

6. (C) Supporting Forces:
 - a. 2/4 Artillery Battalion: Employed in direct support role.
 - b. 9th Division Aviation Battalion and the 145th Aviation Battalion provided the assault aircraft and the armed helicopters in direct support of the brigade.
 - c. 7th Air Division, USAF, flew 35 sorties in support of the operation dropping 57,000 pounds of explosives, 12,000 pounds of napalm and firing 24 pods of air to ground rockets.
7. (C) Intelligence: The operation was a spontaneous reaction following the discovery of a VC element by a preplanned air strike and confirmed by agent reports. The VC element was later identified as a battalion size force consisting of a reinforced company of the 506th VC Bn, 315th Local Force Company, and local guerilla forces.
8. (U) Mission: The 3d Brigade attacked (See Overlay) to locate and destroy the enemy in the objective area and capture or destroy all enemy equipment and supplies located therein.
9. (C) Concept of the Operation: The operation was spontaneous and directed by the Brigade Commander as the tactical situation dictated.
10. (C) Execution:
 - a. On 9 April the 3d Brigade had scheduled one battalion and two company size airmobile assaults. This plan was cancelled when heavy activity was reported in the area of an airstrike conducted in response to an agent report.

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b. The following losses were inflicted on the enemy during the three day operation:

(1) 247 VC KIA (BC).

(2) One wounded POW.

c. The following US losses were sustained during the operation:

(1) Five KIA

(2) One DOW

(3) 31 WHA (11 of whom were at the aid station and returned to duty).

12. (C) Commanders Analysis: This operation, more than any other, proves the immediate reaction capability of the brigade. Whenever an operation of this magnitude can be generated and supported with virtually no time to plan, it reflects great ability and initiative on every member of the command. When comparing the losses sustained by the 3d Brigade in comparison with those inflicted on the enemy, the overwhelming fire power of a well trained and disciplined unit is demonstrated beyond any doubt.

13. (C) Lessons Learned:

a. The brigade must maintain the flexibility to divert planned operations against lucrative targets produced by hard intelligence.

b. Upon initiation of an unscheduled operation, plans must be formulated as maneuver elements are being committed to the objective area.

c. Fire support, reinforcement and extraction contingency planning must parallel operational planning to react to unforeseen situations emerging from vague, incomplete and imprecise intelligence.

d. Division and higher headquarters must be alert to shift resources from unremunerative operations to one that appears to offer lucrative results, whether the battle be a planned operation or not.

e. Units must relentlessly pursue a fleeing enemy with the aid of air, artillery, and gunships. Spooky flare ships are invaluable in this endeavor to illuminate the area at night when the VC attempt to slip away.

f. Air Power and artillery are most effective when ground pressure has placed a fleeing enemy in open terrain. Additionally, air power should be available, one strike following another, to prevent the enemy from taking cover or escaping.

g. The VC fear APC's, their firepower and mobility. The use of APC's has been invaluable in the area of operations of Long An Province, particularly as a complement to air lifted forces.

h. The brigade has an inadequate number of trained personnel and insufficient storage capability to properly refuel airmobile companies. Lack of refueling resources at Tan An airstrip delayed airlifts, in one case, from the 2nd to the 3rd day of the operation. This meant that blocking forces to fill gaps were not placed in position when desired and may have permitted enemy forces to slip out. The Tan An airstrip should be equipped, as a minimum, with 10 each 10,000 gallon rubber fuel tanks with 5 miniport systems allowing 20 refueling points and 1 each 5,000 gallon tank truck for transferring fuel from reserve tanks to operational tanks.

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b. B/3-39 Inf was airlifted into an LZ (XS685694) at 1130 hours. C/3-39 Inf was airlifted into an LZ (XS685694) at 1220 hours. Both companies encountered heavy SA and AW fire upon entering their landing zone.. Simultaneous with the first airlift 2-10 Cav (ARVN) moved west from their base blocking position vic XS 699690. C/3-39 Inf fought their way to objectives vic XS 699690 and XS 695691 and established blocking positions. Recon/3-39 Inf was airlifted to vic XS 696677, swept objectives vic XS 694601 and XS 600695 and established a blocking position in the southern portion of the AO vic XS 695680. The western portion of the objective was blocked by B/2-60 Inf from vic XS 665679. At approximately 1600 the brigade RRF, C/2-60 Inf, was airlifted into an LZ vic XS 713690 and moved along the south bank of the river and established a blocking position. The encirclement was completed when C/3-60 Inf was airlifted to an LZ vic XS 687713 and moved to a blocking position on the northern portion of the AO vic XS 686705.

c. During the evening hours of 9 April numerous engagements occurred as the VC tried to break out of the encirclement. The entire objective was effectively illuminated throughout the night by Spooky flare ship sorties. TF Hq 5-60 Inf (M) and B/5-60 Inf (M) were moved from Binh Phuoc to Rach Kien arriving at 2020 hours. At midnight B/5-60 Inf (M) was committed to fill a gap vic XS 692704 between C/3-60 Inf and 2-10 Cav (ARVN). At this point all forces north of the river were placed under OPCON TF 5-60 Inf (M). By first light enemy contacts had been reduced to sporadic fire fights.

d. Based on the probability that some VC had succeeded in escaping to the west of the objective, the brigade commander ordered TF Hq 5-60 (M) with B/5-60 Inf (M) and C/3-60 Inf into AO Strike vic XS 660707 and XS 670698 at 0730 hours on 10 April. C/3-60 Inf was heavily engaged upon entering this area and as they swept to vic XS 660687. B/3-39 Inf was airlifted from its blocking position to vic XS 663701 to reinforce TF 5-60 Inf (M). From the LZ B/3-39 Inf and B/5-60 Inf (M) were heavily engaged as they swept south to vic C/3-60 Inf.

e. At this point it became obvious that the VC had moved west from the area of the initial engagement. TF 3-39 Inf with C/2-60 Inf, C/3-39 Inf and 2-10 Cav (ARVN) began sweeping to the east toward Rach Kien.

f. During the early afternoon of 10 April, the brigade commander request additional forces to preclude further enemy movement to the north-east. 3-60 Inf (-) was moved by convoy from Dong Tam (PALM BEACH) to the Tan An airstrip. At 1740 hours A/3-60 Inf was airlifted to vic XS 663729 and B/3-60 Inf into vic XS 634729 at 1802 hours. Upon landing, both companies initiated a sweeping operation to the south, which continued into the night of the 10th toward blocking positions occupied by TF 5-60 Inf (M).

g. A platoon size stay behind patrol from A/3-39 Inf was inserted in the original area of operations vic XS 604688 on 10 April. At 2020 hours the patrol was heavily engaged by SA and AW fire from their south. A Spooky flare ship illuminated the area as artillery fire was called in on the suspected VC position. In addition, C/3-39 Inf and 2-10 Cav (ARVN) displaced from Rach Kien to reinforce the patrol. However, the enemy broke contact prior to arrival of the reinforcement.

h. On the morning of 11 April, A/2-60 Inf and 1/4-50 Inf (ARVN) were airlifted to blocking positions vic XS 644692 and XS 650687.

i. By early afternoon on the 11th, contact with the enemy was broken and committed elements were returned to their respective base areas. Results of the operation were 247 VC KIA (BC).

11. (C) Results:

a. The 3d Brigade, 9th Infantry Division, was highly successful in its operations against the 506th VC Bn.

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i. Dustoff aircraft are often not available because of transmission ranges. Use of ordinary slicks decreases airlift and resupply capability for engaged forces and does not provide optimum efficiency in medevac operations. Dustoff aircraft must be always responsive. To effect this, dustoffs must be located at Tan An airstrip. (A brigade clearing hospital is at Tan An).

j. Had it not been for the airmobile company being immediately available, albeit for another planned operation, this golden opportunity based on hard intelligence would have been lost. All major successes to date have been the result of ambushes and immediate air lifts in response to very recent intelligence reports. Preplanned operations involving large air lifts into a known VC way station have not produced fruitful results, for the enemy has invariably moved.

k. The operation can proceed swiftly when few, if any, casualties are taken at the onset. When casualties are taken, the tendency of small units is to stop forward progress, to terminate enemy contact, and to get the wounded "DUSTED OFF" before proceeding. Further, when initial success is attained, there is a great psychological reaction that creates a drive to continue the pursuit of the enemy.

l. Aerial surveillance of the area of the initial strike was invaluable in identifying the VC force which had been located and which precipitated the operation.

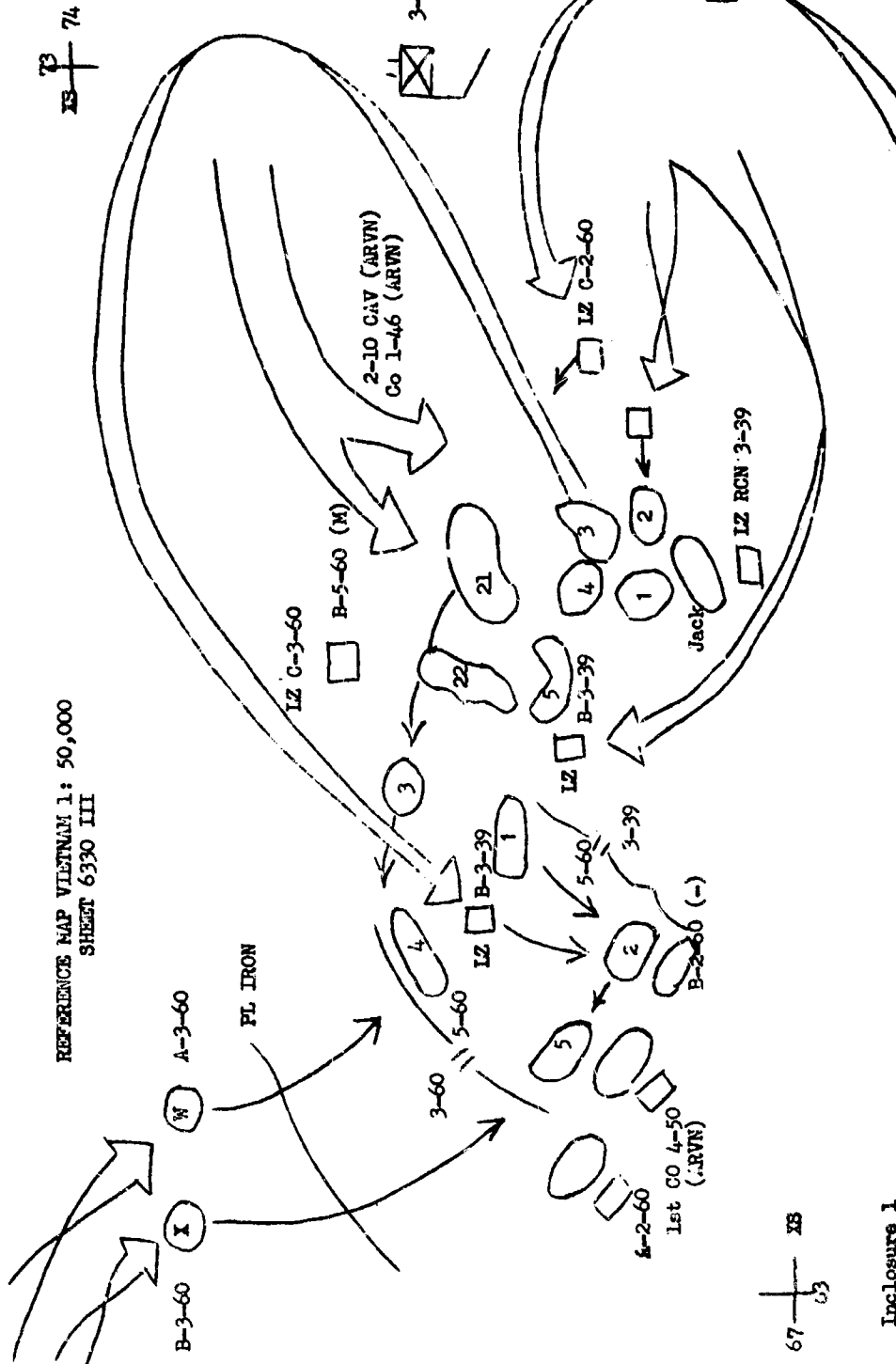
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/S/ CHARLES P. MURRAY
CHARLES P. MURRAY
Colonel, Infantry
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